

PUBLIC HEARING--May 12, 1965

Appeal #8163 The American Institute of Architects, appellants.

The Zoning Administrator District of Columbia, appellee.

On motion duly made, seconded and unanimously carried the following Order was entered on May 17, 1965:

ORDERED:

That the appeal to permit erection of an office building for a non-profit organization and for permission to rent approximately two floors to other non-profit organizations or professional persons, and for a variance from the provisions of the rear yard requirements of the SP District to permit erection of said building at 1735 New York Avenue, N.W., lots 833, 834 and 835, square 170, be granted.

From the records and the evidence adduced at the hearing, the Board finds the following facts:

(1) Appellant's property, which is located in the SP District, has frontages of 174.19 feet on New York Avenue and 231.07 feet on 18th Street and contains an area of approximately 32,267 square feet. The property is at present improved with a three-story, attic and basement building known as the "Octagon House" which will remain in place.

(2) Appellant proposes to raze the existing headquarters building for its staff located on the property with address of 1735 New York Avenue and erect a new headquarters building on the same site to provide housing for its staff, conference rooms for its Board of Directors and various committees, a library, exhibition rooms for architectural exhibits and approximately two floors of additional office space for rental to non-profit and professional tenants until such time as appellant needs such space for its staff.

(3) Appellant seeks a variance from the rear yard requirements of the SP District and requests to designate the 18th Street side of the building as the front, whereas regulations would require a rear yard on the east lot line. He also requests permission to consider the New York Avenue side of the property as the rear of the building and measure the depth of rear yard from the center line of New York Avenue which is permitted by Section 4303.14 of the Zoning Regulations for a through or corner lot abutting three or more streets.

(4) There is a ten foot wide public alley on the north side of the property and a ten foot wide private alley on the east side of the property.

(5) The Department of Highways and Traffic offers no objection to the granting of this appeal

(6) The National Park Service of the Department of Interior states that the new headquarters building has been designed to maintain adequate open space behind the Octagon House to preserve its dignity and beauty. The Institute is thus voluntarily foregoing building on much valuable ground in order to preserve the historic and esthetic values of the Octagon House. If, in addition, the Institute is required to comply with a strict interpretation of the rear yard requirements, and leave substantial space unoccupied on other parts of the lot, serious hardship to it will result. The Department further states that the

Octagon House in 1961 was declared to be a Registered National Historic Landmark by the Secretary of the Interior on the recommendation of the Advisory Board on National Parks, Historic Sites, Buildings, and Monuments of the National Park Service.

(7) There was some objection to the granting of this appeal. The Central Dispensary and Emergency Hospital which lies immediate east of the property and is adjacent to the east boundary of the AIA property, offers no objection to the granting of this appeal. There was no objection from the property abutting the north side boundary across the ten foot wide public alley.

(8) Access to the required basement parking will be from New York Avenue, and the curb cut will be approximately 20 feet wide. There will be a service entrance on the public alley which leads off 18th Street.

OPINION:

We are of the opinion that the erection of this proposed building and the renting out of two floors for a limited time until needed by the appellant, will be in harmony with existing uses on neighboring or adjacent property, and further will not create dangerous or other objectionable traffic conditions. This assumption is substantiated by the Department of Highways and Traffic.

We are further of the opinion that due to the shape of the property and the exceptional and extraordinary situation arising from the importance of preserving the historic Octagon Building by providing adequate space behind it, a rear yard as required by the Zoning Regulations will result in peculiar and exceptional practical difficulties to and exceptional and undue hardship upon the appellant. We are further of the opinion that light and air to adjoining properties will not be affected adversely by the erection of this building.

In view of the situation and conditions of this property it is our further opinion that this relief can be granted without substantial detriment to the public good and without substantially impairing the intent, purpose, and integrity of the zone plan as embodied in the zoning regulations and map.